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Message Text

SECRET

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44
ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /031 W
---------- 112792
P 131750Z JUL 74
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4691

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 CARACAS 6501

EXDIS

DEPT REPEAT MOSCOW IF DESIRED

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR VE CU UR
SUBJECT: CUBA

REF: STATE 151364

SUMMARY - PROBLEM OF CUBA WAS UPPERMOST IN PRESIDENT'S MIND. HE SAID IF IT COULD NOT BE SOLVED, IT WOULD WRECK THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM AND BE GREATLY TO THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE UNITED STATES. HOWEVER, HE WAS IN NO HURRY TO RECOGNIZE CUBA AND HAD INDICATED PRIVATELY TO CASTRO THAT LATTER SHOULD PUBLICLY DISAVOW ANY INTENT OF SUBVERTING SISTER AMERICAN REPUBLICS BEFORE VENEZUELA WOULD CONSIDER RE-ESTABLISHING RELATIONS. IN THIS, SOVIET UNION APPARENTLY WAS GIVING SIMILAR ADVICE TO CASTRO IN ENDEAVOR ULTIMATELY TO RELIEVE ITSELF OF BURDEN OF ECONOMIC SUPPORT FOR CUBA. PRESIDENT THOUGHT CUBAN QUESTION WOULD COME UP AT SEPTEMEBER MFM AND DOUBTED IF THE LINE COULD BE HELD MUCH LONGER ON POLICY OF NONRECOGNITION AND ECONOMIC BLOCKADE. HE OFFERED TO BE A "BRIDGE" BETWEEN U.S. AND OTHER LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS, BUT INDICATED THIS WOULD BE DIFFICULT UNLESS THERE WERE SOME CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY RE CUBA.
END SUMMARY

1. DEPARTMENT'S TELEGRAM REACHED ME LAST NIGHT, BUT I DID NOT NEED TO BRING UP THE QUESTION OF CUBA AS IT WAS THE TOPIC WHICH WEIGHED MOST HEAVILY ON PRESIDENT PEREZ'S MIND DURING OUR HOUR
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AND A HALF LONG BREAKFAST CONVERSATION THIS MORNING. HE BROUGHT

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THE MATTER UP REPEATEDLY AND THEREFORE I HAD NO PROBLEM IN
REITERATING THE U.S. POSITION ON CUBA.

2. PEREZ SAID THAT THE CUBAN PROBLEM WAS THE ONE WHICH MOST
JEOPARDIZED THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM AND ULTIMATELY THE RELATIONS
OF THE UNITED STATES TO THAT SYSTEM. HOWEVER, BEFORE HE ELABORATED
ON THIS THESIS, WHICH RECURRED THROUGHOUT OUR CONVERSATION,
HE GAVE ME SOME INTERESTING INSIGHTS INTO THE SOVIET POSITION
WITH REGARD TO CASTRO.

3. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT THE USSR FOR THE PAST YEAR OR SO HAD
BEEN TRYING TO DIVEST ITSELF OF THE BURDEN OF SUPPLYING OIL TO CUBA.
IN FACT, THE SENDING OF A VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDIUM TO ATTEND
HIS OWN INAUGURAL MARCH 12 HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE INAUGURAL
BUT EVERYTHING TO DO WITH THE SOVIET POSITION ON OIL. WHAT THE
USSR WANTED WAS TO CEASE SENDING ITS OWN OIL TO CUBA AND TO
HAVE VENEZUELA BECOME THE PRINCIPAL SUPPLIER. HOWEVER, SINCE
THE GOV HAD NOT THUS FAR ACQUIESCED IN A CHANGE IN POLICY, THE
SOVIETS HAD ADOPTED SEVERAL OBLIQUE LINES OF APPROACH. ONE WAS
TO STIR UP THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT, WHICH HAD LUCRATIVE ECONOMIC
RELATIONS WITH CUBA, WITH A SUGGESTION THAT VENEZUELAN OIL BE
TRANSFERRED TO CUBA VIA SPAIN, THE SOVIETS TO MAKE UP THAT AMOUNT
OF PETROLEUM BY DIRECT SHIPMENTS TO SPAIN OF THEIR OWN OIL.
ANOTHER SUBTERFUGE, SAID THE PRESIDENT, WAS TO TALK OF THE
ESTABLISHMENT
OF A NEW REFINERY IN YUGOSLAVIA, USING VENEZUELAN OIL WHICH
PRESUMABLY WOULD GO TO CUBA IN THE FORM OF PRODUCTS. HOWEVER,
THE MOST FASCINATING SOVIET PLOY AS DESCRIBED BY PRESIDENT PEREZ
WAS INCREASING SOVIET PRESSURE ON CASTRO TO REINTEGRATE HIMSELF
IN THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM AND TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE, THROUGH
A DECLARATION OF PEACEABLE INTENT, FOR THE OTHER LATIN AMERICAN
COUNTRIES TO RESUME RELATIONS WITH CUBA, THUS LIFTING THE ECONOMIC
BLOCKADE (WHICH PEREZ TERMED IN ANY CASE AS WORTHLESS TODAY)
AND EVENTUALLY ACHIEVING THE SOVIET GOAL OF REDUCING ITS ECONOMIC
BURDEN IN SUSTAINING CUBA.

4. I ASKED THE PRESIDENT IF, SHOULD VENEZUELA BECOME A PRINCIPAL
SUPPLIER OF PETROLEUM TO CUBA, THIS WOULD MEAN A REDUCTION IN ITS
EXPORTS TO OTHER COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES. HE
RESPONDED WITH A NEGATIVE, SAYING THAT IN THE WORLD BALANCE OF
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PETROLEUM SHIPMENTS VENEZUELA WOULD MERELY ADJUST ITS EXPORT
BUT WOULD CONTINUE THE SAME RATE OF SUPPLY TO THE U.S.

5. SO FAR AS PRESIDENT PEREZ WAS CONCERNED, HE WAS IN NO
HASTE TO RECOGNIZE CASTRO OR TO CHANGE THE PRESENT
NONRELATIONSHIP WITH CUBA. THROUGH "VARIOUS CHANNELS" HE
HAD MADE IT CLEAR TO CASTRO THAT NOT ONLY MUST HE MEND HIS
WAYS BUT PUBLICLY SAY SO BEFORE VENEZUELA COULD CONTEMPLATE

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RE-ESTABLISHING RELATIONS. AFTER ALL, IT WAS CASTRO'S ATTEMPT AGAINST VENEZUELAN SOVEREIGNTY WHICH HAD STARTED THE WHOLE THING OFF MORE THAN A DECADE AGO. PRESIDENT PREZ WAS, HOWEVER, CONCERNED WITH WHAT HE CLEARLY REGARDED AS THE INEVITABILITY OF EVENTS AND AN EVENTUAL REACHING OF A MJORITY POSITION WITHIN THE OAS BY THE LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS THAT CUBA MUST BE RECOGNIZED DIPLOMATICALLY AND NO LONGER OSTRACIZED ECONOMICALLY. HERE HE REFERRED TO THE IMPORTATION BY CUBA OF AMERICAN-MADE ARGENTINE MOTOR VEHICLES AND SAID THAT THIS SHOWED HOW RIDICULOUS THE SITUATION HAD BECOME. HE ADDED THAT HE HAD RECENTLY BEEN UNDER GREAT PRESSURE FROM THE ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTER TO RECOGNIZE CUBA.

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED MOSCOW.

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ACTION SS-30

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---------- 112824
P 131750Z JUL 74
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4692

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 CARACAS 6501

EXDIS

DEPT REPEAT MOSCOW IF DESIRED

6. THE PRESIDENT REITERATED THAT HE WAS IN NO HASTE SO FAR AS VENEZUELA WAS CONCERNED AND SAID HE DID NOT THINK THAT COLOMBIA WOULD MOVE IN A DIRECTION TOWARD RECOGNITION WITHOUT VENEZUELA, ALTHOUGH COLOMBIA WAS INCREASINGLY DISSATISFIED WITH THE SITUATION. PRESIDENT PEREZ SAID NO DECISIONS HAD BEEN MADE AND THUS PLACED HIMSELF SOMEWHAT AT VARIANCE WITH THE REPORT GIVEN ME THIS WEEK BY FONMIN SCHACHT, AS REPORTED CARACAS 6267. I SUSPECT NOW THAT SCHACHT'S LATER REJOINDER TO ME AS REPORTED CARACAS 6367 TO THE EFFECT THAT THIS WAS A "VERY SENSITIVE PROBLEM" ON WHICH NO DECISIONS HAD BEEN MADE REFLECTED THE PRESIDENT'S ADMONITION THAT HE SHOULD NOT GET OUT TOO FAR IN FRONT IN DISCUSSING POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE OFFICIAL VENEZUELAN POSITION.

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7. PEREZ CAME BACK REPEATEDLY IN HIS EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN
THAT UNLESS THE CUBAN PROBLEM WERE DEALT WITH FAIRLY SOON IT WOULD
RESULT IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE OAS AND REDOUND TO THE ULTIMATE
(AND PERHAPS CATASTROPHIC) DISADVANTAGE OF THE UNITED STATES.
SO FAR AS THE OAS WAS CONCERNED, IT WAS CERTAINLY NOT A SATISFACTORY
VEHICLE BUT AT LEAST IT WAS BETTER THAN NOTHINGH.BIDFFIT RISKED
DISSOLUTION IF THE CUBAN PROBLEM COULD NOT BE SOLVED. IT WAS
FAIRLY EVIDENT THAT THE PRESIDENT THOUGHT THE CUBAN PROBLEM WOULD
NOT BE SOLVED UNLESS THE UNITED STATES COULD FIND ITS WAY CLEAR TO
CHANGING ITS PRESENT POLICY TOWARD CUBA. HERE THE PRESIDENT
REITERATED THE SUGGESTION THAT CASTRO SHOULD GIVE ASSURANCES TO
THE HEMISPHERIC REPUBLICS OF HIS INTENTION NOT - REPEAT NOT - TO
INTERFERE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER STATES NOR TO EXPORT HIS
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DOCTRINE OF REVOLUTION. AGAIN IT SEEMED IRONIC THAT, ACCORDING
TO PEREZ'S INTERPREATION OF EVENTS, IT WAS THE SOVIET UNION WHICH
ULTIMATELY WOULD PLACE DECISIVE PRESSURE ON CASTRO TO COME OUT
WITH SUCH DECLARATION AND EVENTUALLY TO BRING CUBA BACK INTO THE
OAS FOLD.

8. PRESIDENT PEREZ SEEMED APPREHENSIVE THAT AT THE SEPTEMBER
MFM THERE WOULD RAPIDLY DEVELOP A MAJORITY SENTIMENT IN FAVOR
OF RECOGNIZING CUBA, PERHAPS EVEN BEFORE CASTRO HAD MADE HIS
MEA CULPAS. PURSUANT TO INSTURCIONS IN REFTEL, I SAID I WOULD
REPORT HIS COMMENTS TO MY GOVERNMENT. PEREZ WAS FULLY AWARE
OF CHANGING SENTIMENTS IN THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN
RELATIONS AND WONDERED IF A CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY TOWARD
CUBA MIGHT NOT BE POSSIBLE AFTER OUR NOVEMBER ELECTIONS.
HOWEVER, IN THE MEANWHILE, HE GAVE ME ASSURANCES THAT THERE
WOULD BE NO REPEAT NO ALTERATION OF VENEZUELAN POLICY FOR THE
TIME BEING AND HE INTENDS TO CONSULT WITH US. HE GAVE ME THE
IMPRESSION, HOWEVER, THAT ALL HE COULD HOPE FOR, WITH THE BACKING
OF COLOMBIA AND COSTA RICA, WOULD BE TO HOLD THE LINE AS LONG AS
POSSIBLE; BUT HE DID NOT SEEM SANGUINE THAT THIS COULD CONTINUE
MUCH BEYOND THE SEPTEMBER MFM.

9. COMMENT: I HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT CONTINUED REITERATION OF
OUR POLICY WILL FALL ON INCREASINGLY DEAF EARS. WE ARE REALLY NO
LONGER "CONSULTING" WITH GOVERNMENTS BUT REPEATING WHAT THEY
HAVE HEARD MANY TIMES OVER AND WITH WHICH THEY ARE INCREASINGLY
DISPOSED NOT TO AGREE. PRESIDENT PEREZ SAID HE WOULD BE WILLING
TO SERVE AS A "BRIDGE" BETWEEN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND
OTHER LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS; BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT IN ORDER
TO ACCOMPLISH THIS, HE WOULD HOPE FOR SOME CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY.
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NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED MOSCOW.

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